

MARCH-(ALDEN)

SEMI-CENTENNIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF THE

STATE OF NEW-YORK,

AND

MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE,

IN THE

CAPITOL AT ALBANY, FEB. 4, 1857.

BY ALDEN MARCH, M. D.,
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY.

ALBANY:

C. VAN BENTHUYSEN, PRINTER, 407 BROADWAY.

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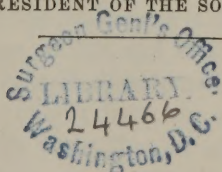
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ADDRESS.

The poet speaks of the *wheels* of time—the philosopher of the irresistible *march* of time—and the good old patient and afflicted man of God compared the *course* of time, or “the days of his years” to the rapid flight of the eagle, as he cleaves the vault of heaven, in seeking his prey; or to the lightning speed of the weaver’s shuttle, as it flits across the eye’s field of vision.

Swift and irresistible as is the *course* of time, nevertheless, by the ingenuity of man, it has been measured and divided into periods.

The steady and unvarying tick—tick—of yonder clock, mark its smaller divisions. A certain number of these ticks make a second—a minute—an hour—a day—a week—a month—a year! And when we come to increase the last division to fifty—half a century! we arrive at a period which indicates the semi-centennial anniversary of the Medical Society of the State of New-York—an event which we are now convened to celebrate.

In youth we are full of ambition, and look to the developments of riper years to crown the joys of our highest aspirations. The *prospective* is the most prominent.

In manhood we begin to feel our strength, both physically and intellectually. At an advanced period of life, we are more prone to dwell on the *retrospective*.

As a society, we have passed the season of youth, and have accomplished half of the journey of a centennial existence. We have arrived at a stage of life, and at a position, where it may be proper for us to look in both directions—backwards and forwards.

It is not solely nor chiefly from the origin and doings of this society for the last fifty years that we are to form an opinion of the mighty revolutions and advancements that have taken place in the physical world around us. Nor can we properly estimate the value of the improvements in our profession without the aid of comparison.

Let us then, for one moment, consider what was the condition of agriculture, of commerce, of manufactures, of the mechanic and fine arts, as well as of the general sciences, on the third day of February, 1807, the date of the organization of our society.

Fifty years ago there were no State or county agricultural societies in this country; and it is more than doubtful if there were any such organizations in Europe. Now, there are State and county agricultural societies scattered throughout the length and breadth of our land—not only “from Maine to Georgia,” but even in the Minnesota territory, at St. Paul’s, in which place a fair was held last fall to exhibit the products of that north-western region, where, but a few years since, the gloom of the wilderness reigned in solitary grandeur.

By the aid of practical agricultural chemistry and improvements in the implements of husbandry, the earth, in many instances, has been made to yield four-fold. To provide the means for securing the increased products of the land, the inventive ingenuity of man has been taxed in the construction of “labor-saving machines.” Seed is sown—crops cultivated—the harvest gathered, and the product carried through the entire process of preparation for consumption by machinery.

There is an oven, located in Brooklyn, Long Island, of capacity sufficient to bake five hundred barrels of flour every day. It is constructed on scientific principles, so that while exposed to the proper degree of heat, the bread is continually in motion on a series of revolving platforms, until it is fit for use, when it emerges, ready for consumption, on miniature rail cars. This is not only a “labor,” but is said to be “a money-saving machine” of about 40 per cent. to consumers.

Machines have been constructed, and worked by horse power, by which a vast amount of manual labor is saved, as a few examples will suffice to show.

Two men with flails will thresh about twenty bushels of wheat a day. Three men and two horses, with a threshing machine, will thresh and clean two hundred bushels a day. One man with the scythe will mow, on an average, about one and a half acres of grass per day. One man and two horses, with a “mowing machine,” will cut ten acres of grass per day. And by McCormick’s “reaping machine” even a greater amount of manual labor is saved.

Recently a “spading machine” has been produced that is said to be capable of doing the work of five ploughs, with the locomotive power of only one or two yoke of oxen.

Fifty years ago, the commercial pursuits of the whole world were carried on either through the agency of the locomotive power of the comparatively sluggish brute animal, or through the fitful and unreliable power of the winds of heaven. Now, by the aid of steam, applied to machinery, the extremes of the civilized earth are almost brought in juxtaposition.

Fulton launched the first steamboat in 1807. Now there are many thousand steamboats traversing the waters of America; and the time saved in travel is seventy per cent. Then it took from thirty to sixty days to cross the Atlantic ocean; now, in our fastest steamers, we can cross in from ten to twelve days.

In 1800, but a little more than half a century, there was not a single railroad in the world. The first railway that was opened for public traffic, and the carriage of passengers, was the Stockton and Darlington in 1825. And the first locomotive engine, for railroad transport, was successfully tried on the Liverpool and Manchester road in 1829. But the glory of first using a locomotive by steam in this country for the conveyance of passengers is due to the State of New-York—to the Mohawk and Hudson, now the Albany and Schenectady—which took place in 1831.

In the United States alone there are now constructed, and in process of construction, nearly 2500 miles of railway. With such facilities the commerce of the world, by land and by sea, is more or less concentrated in the great commercial metropolis of our State.

By the aid of the electric telegraph, messages are sent, and commercial correspondence carried on, in a few minutes, in places at distances of hundreds of miles apart.

The honor of the discovery of the practical application of the electrical fluid, for these purposes, is due to our countryman, Prof. Morse, who is honored at home and abroad;—having recently been knighted by one of the crowned heads of Europe. And with all these proud distinctions, I can not but admire the modesty of the man, as was beautifully illustrated on the occasion of the last "Fourth of July dinner," given to the Americans then in London, by Geo. Peabody, Esq., the London banker, the liberal and kind hearted friend to American citizens, and to all who are honored by his acquaintance.

While one hundred and thirty Americans, with a few Englishmen, were assembled around the festive board, on that interesting occasion, Prof. Morse was called upon for a speech. After some delay and hesitancy, he rose to respond to the call, and remarked that he "could not make a speech—he could only say,

their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

The name of Morse will be known and revered wherever the electric wires have been spread out or may yet penetrate; and his memory will be cherished as long as the everlasting mountains, which produce the material for conducting the will of man, shall endure.

The manufacture of cotton and woolen goods by machinery, was scarcely known in this country, but a little more than half a century ago. It is true that Arkwright and Kay, of England, obtained a patent for a spinning machine as early as 1769; and that Dr. Edmund Cartwright took out a patent for his "power loom" in the year 1785, upon which he made improvements at different times, up to 1792. The use of the spinning jenny of Arkwright, and the power loom of Cartwright, was first introduced into this country by Samuel Slater, of Pawtucket, R. I., in 1790.

It is in the recollection of the speaker, and, I presume, in the memory of some of my auditors, when the little buzzing foot wheel, and the tall hand wheel constituted as much a part of the domestic machinery, or implements of housewifery of every farmer, for the manufacture of linen and woolen fabrics, as the ordinary culinary utensils of the kitchen of that or of the present day. It would be as much of an anomaly for the ladies of this day to be seen dancing back and forth by the side of a tall spinning wheel, and applying the motive power with one hand, while the other was employed in drawing out the thread from the spindle, as it would have been for the farmer's daughters of those days to be seen engaged in waltzing.

The utility of machinery is not limited to the manufacture of cotton, woolen and linen fabrics; but it is also employed in the manufacture of garments, as is illustrated by the sewing machine, where one female will do the work of twenty-four, with the ordinary use of the needle.

The old fashioned Ramage printing press, which was in its day, considered a perfect piece of machinery, with two men to work it, would give two hundred and fifty impressions per hour. Now, with Hoe's ten cylinder type revolving printing machine, ten persons will produce twenty thousand impressions per hour; or in other words, such a press will do the work of one hundred and sixty persons as practised on the old system of printing.

If other illustrations were needed, we have only to refer to some of the different kinds of machinery by which wood and

iron are readily manufactured into a great variety of useful implements. With machinery invented by Blanchard, a New England mechanic, gun-stocks and shoemakers' lasts are turned out, and ship timbers are moulded and shaped for use with one-tenth of the manual labor formerly required. The labor of the carpenter and joiner has been greatly diminished by the planing machine, and by the machine for uniting pieces of wood by tenon and mortise.

In common with our fellow-citizens, the medical profession must feel a deep interest in all these improvements in the mechanic arts. But we cannot forbear to mention one other illustration of our subject, more especially important to physicians of rural districts. I refer to the announcement not long since made, that a mechanic of Philadelphia had constructed a horse shoe in such a manner that it requires no nails, and can be put on by any one without the aid of a blacksmith.

Half a century ago, there were but few Americans engaged in the cultivation of the fine arts. At a more recent date, however, we can boast, with honest pride, of the names of some of original genius.

Of the selected few of portrait painters, the name of our esteemed and valued friend, Ezra Ames, a late citizen of this place, whose portrait of the immortal Washington has graced this Legislative Hall for nearly half a century, presents itself to my mind. In another half century, should this portrait then be in existence, it will most likely be called an "old painting." And who knows that it may not be as highly valued as the works of those who are now called the "old masters."

Stuart, Page, Inman, Elliot, and Freeman, as portrait painters, are worthy of having their names enrolled among the cultivators of the fine arts.

In landscape painting we have a Cole, a Church, a Durand, a Kensett, a Cropsey, and our own young artists, the Harts.

Sculpture was hardly cultivated as an art in this country fifty years ago. Now we have artists in this line, of wide spread reputation. Powers, Crawford, Brown and Greenough, nearly all of whom, I believe, are residing in Italy, are well and extensively known. And destined to be not less celebrated in this divine art, is our own townsman, Mr. Palmer, whose fame has already extended across the Atlantic. To show in what estimation his talents and attainments are held by one who must be allowed to be a good judge of his merits, and at the same time to show the kindness of heart and liberality of a brother artist, I beg to relate the following incident :

While on a recent visit to Florence, the speaker, in company with several American friends, called at the studio of Mr. Powers, the justly celebrated American sculptor. As we expressed our admiration and delight while viewing the many beautiful pieces of his handiwork, and a wish that our country might possess more of them, he replied, "you need not send abroad for statuary, or for sculpture of any kind; you need not go out of your own city;" and then added, "I consider Mr. Palmer, of Albany, equal to any artist, in his line, either in this (Italy) or any other country." This was regarded at the time as a high compliment; but recently, if it were possible, a more substantial one, in a just appreciation of Mr. Palmer's merits has been tendered to him by the citizens of the cities of New-York and Boston.

In the art of engraving, we venture to say that little was known and much less executed fifty years ago on this side of the Atlantic. Now we can refer with pride to the names of a Fairman, a Durand, a Rawdon; and in our own city it is our happiness and pleasure to point to the name of Gavit, who is not only an artist but also a man of science, and of a highly cultivated mind.

In some of the departments of the natural sciences almost a complete revolution has taken place within the last fifty years. and in none to so great an extent as in the science of chemistry. In speaking of the elementary principles which were known in 1820 to be only fifty-three in number, (besides the imponderable bodies,) Andrew Ure, the celebrated Glasgow chemist, says, "*It is possible that the elements of nature are divisible; it is probable that they are altogether unknown; and that they are so recondite as forever to elude the sagacity of human research.*" To say nothing of the great additions that have been made to the list of elementary substances, (there being now sixty-three, and perhaps more,) and the discovery of many new combinations since Prof. Ure* expressed these sentiments, a single illustration will suffice to show the observant world of taste, what has been accomplished in the past few years.

What is more startling and beautiful than the modern discovery in the science of chemistry, that has taught the artist to convert the sun himself into an exceedingly accurate and beautifully minute painter? whose portraits, landscapes, and other delineations of art and nature, are beyond all comparison, far more exquisitely and rapidly executed, than were the master pieces of a Rembrandt, a Rubens, or a Vandyck!

*Since the above was written, we observe that the death of Doct. Ure took place on the 2d ultimo, in the seventy-ninth year of his age.

Half a century ago organic chemistry was not known as a branch of chemical science. "Within the last few years," says a popular author, "organic chemistry has made enormous steps ; but they are still too evidently the unsteady, tottering steps of a young giant."

Voltaism was discovered in 1800. Electro-magnetism in 1820 by Orested. Subsequently new developments in electro-magnetic induction were made by Arago, Sir H. Davy, and by our own countryman, (and I am proud to say a native of Albany,) Prof. Joseph Henry, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, whose talents and scientific attainments have shed a glorious lustre on our country.

Ether and chloroform, as anæsthetic agents, are the discoveries, as it were of yesterday ;—the discovery of the former being due to our countrymen, and which, without doubt, led to the discovery of the anæsthetic property of the latter. Now, these agents for rendering individuals insensible to the use of the knife, in the performance of surgical operations, are known and used throughout the civilized world.

By the science of mineralogy, which is quite modern, at least in the United States, the earth has been made to yield her treasures to supply the comforts and luxuries of an advanced state of civilization and refinement.

The useful minerals and precious metals abound in our country to an extent almost unparalleled. Among the most important, we have an abundance of iron, copper, lead and coal. These minerals are far more necessary and useful to us than the precious metals of the famed Potosi of ancient times, or of the California gold of recent discovery.

Our railways are being supplied with iron of our own manufacture, and without the aid of the anthracite and bituminous coal of this country, the former having been discovered by Dr. T. C. James in 1804, how would our cities and large towns be lighted or heated, or how would our manufacturing machinery be propelled, or our steamers forced across the Atlantic in twelve days ?

It is but twenty-five years since the first telescope, exceeding those of a portable size, was imported into the United States. Then we had no mechanician like our Spencer ; no observatories nor astronomers. Now observatories are located in different parts of the United States, and furnished with instruments and astronomers whose far-reaching eye penetrates infinity of space ; discovering ever and anon, new planets and new worlds in the

starry heavens; and calculating their distances from each other, and from the earth, with the same ease and accuracy as the mathematician calculates the simplest problem in Euclid.

Even the city of Albany can boast of her Dudley Observatory, which is to be supplied with the most complete and magnificent set of astronomical instruments that are now in existence. And to this collection will be added, during the present month the wonderful "*Calculating Engine*" of the Swedish mechanician, the only one ever constructed, by which Astronomical tables can be calculated, printed, and stereotyped with infinite accuracy.

Hasty and incomplete as has been our glance at the condition of agriculture, commerce, the arts and sciences, it is enough to show that the whole face of the civilized physical world is stamped with *progress*; and that her motto is "onward."

And has there been no corresponding advancement in the art and science of medicine during the last fifty years? To aid in the solution of this question, let us refer to the origin and progress of our society; to the power it has exerted in extending new discoveries; and to the social and happy influence its annual gatherings disseminate among its members.

The names of the founders of the "Medical Society of the State of New-York" are worthy of being perpetuated, not only in our written records, but also in the memories of the present, and of future generations.

A legislative act, entitled "An act to incorporate Medical Societies, for the purpose of regulating the practice of physic and surgery in this State," was passed on the 4th of April, 1806. During that year it appears that twenty-two counties organized medical societies under the provisions of the act; and that each society elected a delegate to represent them in the convention that assembled in this city on the 3d of February, 1807, for the purpose of organizing the "Medical Society of the State of New-York." And, as an act of justice due to the memories of our long since departed "fathers," we here transcribe the names of the delegates, and the respective counties they represent, on the occasion of the formation of this society:

Dr. William McClelland, county of Albany.

Moses Willard, county of Rensselaer.

John Stearns, county of Saratoga.

Philip Smith, county of Washington.

Alexander Sheldon, county of Montgomery.

Westel Willoughby, county of Herkimer.

Caleb Sampson, county of Oneida.

Dr. Danforth Shumway, county of Lewis.
 Hugh Henderson, county of Jefferson.
 James Moore, county of Madison.
 John H. Frisbee, county of Onondaga.
 Barnabas Smith, county of Cayuga.
 Reuben Hart, county of Ontario.
 Gurdon Huntington, county of Otsego.
 Jesse Shepherd, county of Schoharie.
 John Ely, county of Greene.
 Thomas B. Whitmarsh, county of Delaware.
 James G. Graham, county of Ulster.
 David R. Arnell, county of Orange.
 Lyman Cook, county of Westchester.
 John M. Mann, county of Columbia.
 Wm. Wheeler, county of Dutchess.

Of this long list of worthies, and many more, by whom their places have been filled, not one survives ! Well may we exclaim, in the language of the Prophet of old, “ Your fathers, where are they ? and the Prophets, do they live forever ? ” If the “ fathers ” and the wise of our profession do not “ live forever,” their deeds, if good, and great, and benevolent, should live in the hearts and affections of their survivors ; and, in their turn, should be handed down from generation to generation for all time to come.

Since the organization of the society, thirty-one different individuals have been elected President—some having served one, two, three, and four years. And of this large number, more than one half have been called to render an account of their stewardship.

For the benefit of those who feel an interest in the statistics of our society, I herewith present a list of the names of the different Presidents, the date of their election, the time of their service, and the names of the counties from which they were selected :

1807—	Dr. W. McClelland,	county of Albany.
1808—	Nicholas Romeyn,	county of New-York.
1809—	“ “ “	
1810—	“ “ “	
1811—	Wm. Wilson,	county of Columbia.
1812—	J. R. B. Rodgers,	county of New-York.
1813—	“ “ “	
1814—	“ “ “	
1815—	Joseph White,	county of Otsego.
1816—	“ “ “	
1817—	John Stearns,	county of Saratoga.
1818—	“ “ “	

1819—	Dr. John Stearns, county of Saratoga.
1820—	“ “ “
1821—	Samuel L. Mitchell, county of New-York.
1822—	“ “ “
1823—	Alex. Coventry, county of Oneida.
1824—	“ “ “
1825—	Jas. R. Manley, county of New-York.
1826—	“ “ “
1827—	T. Romeyn Beck, county of Albany.
1828—	“ “ “
1829—	“ “ “
1830—	Jonathan Eights, county of Albany.
1831—	“ “ “
1832—	Thos. Spencer, county of Madison.
1833—	“ “ “
1834—	John H. Steele, county of Saratoga.
1835—	“ “ “
1836—	Jas. McNaughton, county of Albany.
1837—	“ “ “
1838—	Laurens Hull, county of Oneida.
1839—	“ “ “
1840—	Sumner Ely, county of Otsego.
1841—	John B. Beck, county of New-York.
1842—	Wm. Taylor, county of Onondaga.
1843—	Sam'l White, county of Columbia.
1844—	Joel A. Wing, county of Albany.
1845—	James Webster, county of Cayuga.
1846—	John McCall, county of Oneida.
1847—	T. W. Blatchford, county of Rensselaer.
1848—	A. H. Stevens, county of New-York.
1849—	“ “ “
1850—	Alex. Thompson, county of Cayuga.
1851—	R. G. Frary, county of Columbia.
1852—	Alonzo Clark, county of New-York.
1853—	Jenks S. Sprague, county of Otsego.
1854—	C. B. Coventry, county of Oneida.
1855—	Frank H. Hamilton, county of Erie.
1856—	Alden March, county of Albany.

It will be found that these individuals have been selected from different counties and parts of the State ; and that there exists this curious coincidence, that the first President to commence and the last to close the half century, just expired, were selected from the city and county of Albany.

To say that medical knowledge has increased in the same proportion as that of other arts and sciences, would not be sufficient. We should most likely be called on to particularize ; and to show wherein the greatest achievements have been accomplished during the last half century.

In pursuing our enquiry, we shall, from necessity,—for want of time, and the necessary ability to do the subject justice, pass by the consideration of the accessory or collateral branches, and proceed at once to refer to the practical, the demonstrative part of our subject.

It is only within the last half century that pathological anatomy has attained to any thing like a high position in the education of a good physician or surgeon. For a long time the discoveries in pathological anatomy were unfolded only by the use of the scalpel. Quite recently the solids and fluids of the body, both in health and disease, have been examined, with the aid of the microscope, in a way that has thrown new light on many points heretofore shrouded in darkness. Pathological chemistry, or that science by which the changes of the elementary principles, or constituents of the organism may be detected, should be more thoroughly cultivated by medical chemists.

The secretions of the kidneys and urinary calculi, may be analyzed by a chemical process, with so much accuracy as to decide the proportions of alkalies, of acids, of earths and of the animal matter each specimen may contain ; as the somewhat recent investigations of Dr. Bright will show.

Prof. Simpson says, “If we knew the pathological chemistry of the blood and fluids, as well as we do the pathological anatomy of the solids of the body,—a knowledge, I repeat, that is to be longed for, but which has been only yet most slightly acquired—then medicine, both as a science and as an art, would probably make a forward march of the greatest moment.”

If the fluids, which enter into the formation of animal existence are in the proportion of ten to one of the solidity, as is alleged by physiologists, is it not reasonable that we should look for still farther developments of the nature of disease, by a thorough chemical analysis of the fluids ? It has been suggested whether some peculiar form of toxæmia or blood poisoning, may not produce specific inflammations of the skin ; as small-pox, scarlatina, measles, erysipelas, phlebitis and inflammation of puerperal fever. If we compare the extent, and the variety of use of the means of physical diagnosis of the present day with those of half a century ago, we shall find that great advances

have been made in this important branch of our science. Of late years the special senses have been educated and trained to detect the most minute distinctions in color, in form, and in density of morbid structures. By the eye, the ear and the fingers, often the signs of diseased parts, may be as clearly indicated as by the scalpel of the dissector after death.

Fifty years ago, who ever heard of the physician or surgeon making use of the stethoscope, or of his applying his ear to the chest of his patient to ascertain the physical condition of the lungs, or the heart's action? The terms "auscultation" and "percussion," as applied to physical diagnosis, were altogether unknown.

Similar means have been employed to detect the existence of diseases in other cavities and organs. If precision and accuracy in detecting the physical signs of disease, stamp the present as a new era in physical diagnosis, our means of successfully treating diseases have been enlarged and improved in a corresponding degree.

The exploring needle, which is a modern invention, is used by the surgeon to ascertain the character of the structure of a tumor, or the contents of a cyst or a sac. Quite recently there has been invented the instrument called Ophthalmoscope, by which the diseases of the deep tissues of the eye may be examined with ease and accuracy. In June last, I found this instrument extensively used by the ophthalmic surgeons of Vienna and Berlin; and at that time, I thought it was hardly known to the profession in America. But in the Boston medical and surgical journal of the 28th of June, I found the instrument described, and its use explained, by our countryman, John H. Dix, M. D., of Boston. This will not only serve to show that we are constantly making new discoveries and improvements in our profession, but also the rapidity with which they are hurried across the Atlantic, or pass from continent to continent.

In the domains of *Materia Medica* some most remarkable advances have been made within the last few years. New medical agents have been added to our list of remedies: such as iodine, with its various compounds,—hydrocyanic acid, gallic acid, cod liver oil, &c.; whilst by a chemical process many of the old vegetable and bulky articles that were in use have been converted into alkaloids, or the alkalies extracted from them, in which all their medical potency resides.

Obstetrics, and the diseases peculiar to females, are now far better understood and managed than formerly. Although sur-

gery, at the commencement of the present century, was in advance of some other departments of medicine, yet we observe a marked change within the last twenty-five or thirty years.

To point out the contrast between the present and former practice of surgery, we need not go back to the days of barber practice, as was exhibited in the operative art of our profession. Now medical surgery is studied as a science; and with the unbounded resources of an enlarged and improved *Materia Medica*, diseases and lesions that were once deemed incurable, are now medicated successfully. In the treatment of wounds, hemorrhage, inflammation, and ulcers, there is great improvement.

It is but a few years since the subject of tenotomy was introduced as a means of correcting deformities. Twenty years ago, club feet, and crooked eyes, were to be met with at almost any turn of our streets. Now, especially in young persons, scarcely any such deformity is to be seen. The success of the operation for dividing tendons and muscles, and subsequent mechanical treatment to correct deformities and malpositions of the extremities, may be calculated on with great certainty, among infants and young children. The great variety of plastic operations for removing other kinds of deformities are of modern invention, and work wonders when nicely executed. Less than fifty years since, in almost all cases of compound dislocation of large joint, the practice was to resort to amputation. Now but few primary amputations take place in compound dislocations. Before the day of Sir Benj. Brodie, and the improved treatment of diseases of the joints for saving the life of the patient laboring under such grave affections, amputation was deemed indispensable. Now we remove decayed bone, excise joints and save limbs of far more utility and comfort than the best Palmer's artificial leg ever manufactured.

By a limited examination of the subject, we shall see that practical medicine, within the last fifty or sixty years, has advanced in the same proportion as surgery. This has been chiefly brought about by a more accurate knowledge of pathology, of diagnosis, and of the nature and powers of many new remedies. The resources of nature have been more thoroughly studied; and the observant physician knows better when to proffer his services to aid nature, and when to withhold the interference of art.

The improvements in the healing art, that may be regarded of recent date, are not to be considered as solely dependent on a more accurate pathological knowledge, and a more extended

acquaintance with *materia medica*; but we now entertain more correct views of prophylactic and hygienic measures. Air and exercise, food and raiment, pure water and cleanliness, are as important to health, and contribute as much to the longevity of our species, as the best medicines when most judiciously employed. The following statement will serve to illustrate these facts:

“Formerly, towards the middle of the last century, fifty or sixty out of every hundred children born in London, died before they had reached their fifth year of age; but the mortality has gradually and steadily diminished, so that now not above thirty or thirty-five in every hundred die at that early period.”

At the present time there are more than 600,000 children born annually in Great Britain. According to the above scale of mortality, more than 300,000 of these would have perished formerly before they were five years old; now only about 200,000 die during the first five years of life; thus showing a saving of human life in this item alone, in the population of the British Isles, to the extent of at least 100,000 a year.

By reference to the tables of “Vital Statistics,” we farther learn, “that in the latter part of the sixteenth century one half of all who were born died under five years of age; the average longevity of the whole population was but eighteen years. In the seventeenth century one-half of the population died under twelve years of age. But in the first sixty years of the eighteenth century one half of the population lived over twenty-seven years. In the latter forty years one-half exceeded thirty-four years of age. At the beginning of the present century one-half exceeded forty years; and from 1838 to 1845 one-half exceeded forty-three years. The average longevity at these successive periods has been increased from 18 years in the sixteenth century, up to 43 7-10 by the last reports.”

There are certain classes of moral as well as physical defects and derangements that have of late years, and I am quite certain within the last half century, in this country at least, attracted the attention of the humane physician. And I think we may say with confidence and with pride, that no class of men, professional or otherwise, have done more to ameliorate the moral and physical condition of the unfortunate, the poor and degraded, and to aid the cause of religion, than our profession.

Fifty years ago where were our medical and surgical hospitals, our houses of correction for juvenile delinquents, our insane hospitals, our asylums for the deaf and dumb, our retreat for the idiot,

and, as is now contemplated, a refuge for the poor, besotted inebriate? My sensitive and sympathising audience hardly need to be excited with the recital of the dark picture of the condition of the unfortunate and unhappy maniac, previous to the commencement of the present century. Then his habitation was either a dark, narrow cell, or a cage; he was secured by a straight jacket or manacled and chained with as much unfeeling severity as a galley slave; his treatment was starvation and filth, stripes and bruises, scorn and hatred. Now, the body and mind are cared for and scientifically treated. All these benevolent and praiseworthy institutions are under the superintendence of kind-hearted physicians.

Let us next devote a few moments to the consideration of the agencies that have been employed during the last half century in enlarging the field of medical knowledge.

At the present time, colleges and schools devoted to medical instruction, and hospitals managed by physicians and surgeons, afford the chief means for educating young men in the practice of physic and surgery.

In 1807 there were not half a dozen medical schools in the United States; nor scarcely a greater number of hospitals. Now there are about forty medical colleges, or associations where medicine and surgery are taught; and it is probable that there are twice that number of hospitals scattered through the cities and large towns of the United States.

The names and dates of the organization of the five oldest medical institutions in this country are the following, viz: The Medical Department of the University of Pennsylvania was established in 1765. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of the city of New-York was instituted 1768, in connection with Columbia College, and in 1807 obtained an independent charter. The Medical School of Boston, Mass., now the Medical Department of Harvard University, was organized in 1782. The Medical Department of Dartmouth College, in 1798; and the University of Maryland, Baltimore, in 1807.

When our medical colleges or schools were limited to five, and the hospitals of this country but a little more numerous; when the whole apparatus, chemicals, and chemical tests of the chemists laboratory could be almost packed in a bushel; when the anatomical museum of a college consisted of two or three smoky skeletons, a handful of disjointed bones, and a few coarsely injected preparations;—and when a pathological cabinet was not known in our country; it requires no very great stretch of the

imagination to draw the contrast between the advantage of 1807 and those of 1857, for obtaining a thorough practical medical education.

We are now prepared to ask the question, what agency do medical societies exert in advancing and improving medical science? If the act to incorporate medical societies had been made to read, "for the purpose of extending and improving medical science," instead of simply, "for the purpose of regulating the practice of physic and surgery," it would have been more in conformity to the spirit and practical working of our society as it is now organized.

In addressing the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh, on the modern advancement of physic, Prof. Simpson says: "I believe that at the present time there exists but one opinion in relation to the fact, that the study of medicine, like the study of other departments of practical science and art, has been vastly promoted by associations like our own."

Prof. Wood, late President of the American Medical Association, in his address before that body, in speaking of the tendency of the profession to become indolent, careless and mercenary in protecting the best interests of the profession, says: "The medical mind, anterior to the birth of this association, was in a state of comparative inertia. In all the departments of the profession, the educational as well as the practical, material interests began to preponderate. The great struggle seemed to be in the teaching department to gather pupils; in the practical to gather patients; in both, to swell the pockets. No wonder that quackery loomed upwards, as regular medicine began to sink." He adds: "But the association arose, and a new spirit was awakened. Many had been watching this apparent abasement of the profession with sorrow; but they were powerless in their isolation. No sooner had the flag of the association been given to the breeze, than they hastened to join its standard. From all quarters and from the remotest bounds of the country, volunteers poured in to join this great crusade against the evils which had been usurping the sacred places of the profession. The mass of medical society was moved to its very depth. Hundreds upon hundreds came forth from their sheltering privacy, and threw their souls into the grand movement which was to conquer, to purify and regenerate the prostrated glory of their calling. The feeble voice of opposition was heard for a moment; but it was soon drowned in the overwhelming shouts of the masses crying out, Onward! Onward!"

Those who felt but little confidence in the anticipated good that was to arise from the organization of the American Medical Association, either to the public or to the profession, must acknowledge that a new impulse has been given to the science of medicine in this country since it was founded. And the glory of starting the ball is due to the State of New York—to this society; and almost entirely to the untired exertions of Prof. N. S. Davis, now of Chicago, in the call of a convention, suggested by the writer, out of which the Association grew. It appears on record that Dr. Hays, of Philadelphia, first suggested the idea of instituting a "National Medical Association;" and that the honor of submitting the plan for the permanent organization of the "American Medical Association," is due to John Watson, M.D., of New York, chairman of the committee of organization.

Well may we be proud not only of our own society and its achievements in literature and science, but also of the agency it has had in promoting the *national* prosperity of our noble profession. Let us then continue to act honestly and faithfully in the discharge of our professional duties to each other, and to the public even if our motives should be impugned or fail to be properly appreciated. We may meet with discouragement, neglect and insult, but let us not weary in well doing.

The storms and tempests of quackery may assault the citadel of the science of medicine and surgery. The good, old and well tried ship "Regular," commanded by officers and recruits of the orthodox profession of medicine, may be tossed and veered about by the popular "isms" of the day—nay, she may occasionally lose a *spar*, or receive a *breach* of continuity in some of her light cordage, yet her mainmast stands erect, without *fracture* of her beams, without *dislocation* of her helm, and with a hull as sound and as safe, as on the day she was launched. She still floats on the sea of "Confidence," and even though she may now and then be threatened with a mutiny among some of her undisciplined recruits, yet we find the captain in command, the pilot at his post, the helmsman on duty and the watchman at mast head, warning us of approaching danger.

Rapid and imperfect as has been our sketch of the past, may we not see enough in it to fill us with high and encouraging hopes for the future? And as we look forward through the vista of another half century, may we not confidently hope that our successors will be able, in their turn, to leave upon record an account of far greater and more numerous achievements in the arts

and sciences and advancements in our profession, than has been our privilege to record.

Our social relations, and the kindly feelings our annual reunions are calculated to promote, are well fitted to exert a happy influence on our hearts, and to inspire confidence in, and respect for each other.

Let these sentiments be cherished, and whether it shall be our lot again to meet here, or hereafter, may it be one of serene and unalloyed enjoyment.

